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# The Safety Rules Can Protect Your Child

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## 1. Never ride out into a street without stopping first.

Nearly a third of car-bike crashes involving a young child occur when the child rides a bicycle down a driveway or from a sidewalk into the street and in front of a car. Kids must learn to stop, look left, look right, look left again and listen to be sure no cars are coming before entering a street. Look left that second time because cars coming from the left are on the child's side of the street and are closer. Use your driveway or sidewalk to demonstrate this way to enter a street. Have the child practice the entry, looking left, looking right and looking left again. Make sure that they understand that because they see a car does not mean the driver sees them. They must always assume that the driver has not.

## 2. Obey stop signs.

Nearly a third of the car-bike crashes with a young child occur when a child rides through a stop sign or red light without yielding to crossing traffic. Kids must learn to stop, look left, look right, then look left again at all stop signs, stop lights and intersections before crossing. Make sure they know the basics about stop signs and stop lights. Then take your child to a controlled intersection and practice crossing safely. Explain that when riding in a group, *each bicyclist* must

stop and make sure it is clear before crossing. (see Rule 4) Teach young children to walk their bikes through busy intersections. Remind them that it is the law to obey traffic signals even when no one appears to be coming. While you are at it, explain one-way



streets to them too.

## 3. Check behind before turning, swerving, or changing lanes.

Nearly a third of the car-bike crashes involving children occur when a child turns suddenly into the path of faster moving traffic. Kids must learn to look behind them, signal and look behind again before swerving, turning or changing lanes. The best place to practice this is in a quiet parking lot or playground. Stand behind them while they ride along a straight painted line. Hold up numbered cards and have them practice looking back over their shoulder and telling you the number on the card -- without swerving off the painted line. Children should not be allowed to ride their bikes on the street alone until they have mastered this skill.

## 4. Never follow another rider without applying the rules.

Many fatalities occur when the first rider violates one of the three rules above and the second one just blindly follows. The statistics show that one of the three rules above caused the crash, but the real reason was following another rider. Running stop signs or red lights, riding out of driveways or zipping across lanes all seem natural to the second child in line because they are more focused on following the first rider than on the traffic or the rules. This will not be an easy lesson to absorb!

## Before you get on your bike, put on a helmet!

Every year about 800 people die in the U.S. from bicycle crashes. Most of them die from head injuries. Many more have their brains scrambled and live for a long time or sometimes for the rest of their lives with something that doesn't function right up there. Brain damage can cause learning disabilities, personality changes and rob your child of the ability to think clearly. Hospital emergency room studies show that a helmet can prevent that about 85 per cent of that. So you don't want your child riding a bike without one, even on your block, on the sidewalk or on a bike trail. The fall is from the same height wherever they ride!

**Now, on to the back panel.**

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## Here are the steps:

- **First, teach them the four rules to avoid fatal crashes!**
- **Then teach them to wear a helmet,**
- **Then, help them learn to balance and ride according to the rules.**



Some parents begin and end with teaching balance. But step one is the most important: teaching your child how to avoid the situations that produce hundreds of dead children every year. And you probably are aware already that a helmet is essential when they make a mistake. Teaching them to balance is the easiest part for most kids. Then you have to practice the four basic safety rules in actual riding. It can take you an extra couple of hours, but the result is well worth the effort!

**Warning: Children must remove helmets before climbing on playground equipment or trees, where a helmet can snag and choke them.**

## The Fun Part: Time to Ride

**Gear:** Start with a helmet, gloves to protect the skin on their hands and perhaps even skaters' knee and elbow pads for the first rides. Adjust the bicycle for them and be sure they can reach pedals, bars and brakes comfortably.

**Brakes first!** Show your kid how to stop the bike. Hold them up and gently move them forward as they use the brakes to stop until you are sure they know how.

**Balance:** Run alongside the bike, holding it up by the seat with one hand on the handlebars to show how you turn them to keep the bike upright.

**Riding:** Nobody learns without practice. Riding with your child is probably the best way to practice the rules. Go over the rules, then ride, stopping occasionally to review what they have just done and praise their good performance. Notice that if they are behind you, your rule about not following automatically will be severely challenged, even if you ride through a red light or directly into the path of a car! As with almost any other skill, practice is required to ingrain techniques. More than one session will be needed. But the result is worth your time.

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## Teaching Your Child to Ride a Bicycle



**More than wearing a helmet,  
More than just balance,  
Teaching your child survival rules!**

